A political guide to key passages in the speech

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Body

OTTAWA-The Liberals laid out their policy priorities Thursday for this minority Parliament. The fate of the government depends on support from opposition MPs so the speech highlighted the theme of common ground and sprinkled targeted appeals to Justin Trudeau's political rivals.

Here's a guide to some key passages.

"We open this 43rd Parliament with a call for unity in the pursuit of common goals and aspirations."

What it means: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is declaring up front the governing Liberals will aim to be co-operative and collaborative in this minority Parliament, a theme that runs throughout the speech.

"In this election, parliamentarians received a mandate to ... fight a climate change, strengthen the middle class, walk the road of reconciliation, keep Canadians safe and healthy, and position Canada for success in an uncertain world."

What it means: Despite the early nod to co-operation, this is a pointed expression of the Liberal election priorities and reminder to opposition MPs that the Liberals won a mandate to act on them.

"The government has heard Canadians' concerns that the world is increasingly uncertain and that the economy is changing. And in this context, regional needs and differences really matter. Today's regional economic concerns are both justified and important."

What it means: This is a clear nod not just to regional divisions laid bare by the election, but to the government's concern that national unity is under pressure. The resource-based economies of Alberta and Saskatchewan are hurting and the premiers of both provinces are agitating for federal action. The election saw a resurgence of the separatist Bloc Québécois. But apart from this brief section, the speech gives surprisingly little attention to the issue.

"Canada's children and grandchildren will judge this generation by its action - or inaction - on the defining challenge of the time: climate change."

What it means: The Liberal government declared a "climate emergency" earlier this year, and boasts it has pursued the most aggressive climate policies ever at the federal level. But the Greens and New Democrats condemned the lack of new detail or more aggressive action on climate in the Throne speech.

"A clear majority of Canadians voted for ambitious climate action now."

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What it means: This is a reminder to the Conservative Party that its climate plan did not carry it to government, and is a direct reference to the fact that 65.6 per cent of voters cast ballots for the Liberals, Bloc Québécois, NDP or Greens.

"The government will continue to lead in ensuring a price on pollution everywhere in this country, working with partners to further reduce emissions."

What it means: This is a reference to the contentious national minimum price on carbon that Ottawa set this year. It is slated to jump to $30 per tonne of emissions in 2020 and $50 per tonne in 2022. The Liberals have not said whether it will continue to increase after that, but they plan to consult with provinces and territories before deciding.

"... help to make energy efficient homes more affordable, and introduce measures to build clean, efficient and affordable communities."

What it means: A possible area of common ground. The Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats made election promises to offer financial support to homeowners who retrofit their homes.

"Further, it will continue efforts to reduce plastic pollution."

What it means: The Green party and NDP both want a ban on single-use plastics. The Liberals have pledged to outlaw "harmful" single-use plastics as early as 2021.

"And while the government takes strong action to fight climate change, it will also work just as hard to get Canadian resources to new markets, and offer unwavering support to the hardworking women and men in Canada's natural resources sectors, many of whom have faced tough times recently."

What it means: Here the Liberals try to reassure western Canadians that they won't be sidelined in the efforts to combat climate change. The Liberal government bought the Trans Mountain pipeline for $4.5 billion in 2018 and is moving ahead to expand it. The Bloc Québécois, which said Thursday it will vote to support the throne speech, latched onto this passage, arguing the phrase "natural resources" is a clear reference to the oil industry, but that its lack of specificity will allow them to push the government to champion sectors in Quebec like forestry and hydroelectricity.

"As its first act, the government will cut taxes for all but the wealthiest Canadians, giving more money to middle-class families and those who need it most."

What it means: This broad tax cut will probably find support among opposition parties and mirrors a personal income tax cut the Conservatives also proposed.

"Crucial investments in affordable housing. It will also make it easier for more people to buy their first home."

What it means: All the parties signalled housing as a priority in their election platforms. The NDP and Greens favoured more investment in affordable housing, the Conservatives featured more support for first-time home buyers too.

"It will cut the cost of cell and wireless services by 25 per cent. It will strengthen the pensions that so many seniors rely on and increase the federal minimum wage."

What it means: This list ticks the boxes of several NDP priorities. Still, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh criticized how the speech included specific commitments in some areas like this but was more vague in other areas. Conservatives had also made proposals to aid seniors.

"The government will remove additional barriers to domestic and international trade for businesses and farmers, continue with ambitious investments in infrastructure, and reduce red tape so that it is easier to create and run a start-up or small business."

What it means: This flicks at Conservative priorities.

"Reconciliation with Indigenous people remains a core priority for this government, and it will continue to move forward as a partner on the journey of reconciliation."

What it means: This statement and several specific pledges that follow, such as further action on drinking water advisories in First Nations communities, touch on NDP priorities.

"The government will take steps to introduce and implement national pharmacare so that Canadians have the drug coverage they need."

What it means: Pharmacare was a priority for the Liberals, New Democrats and Greens in the election - but the latter parties were quick to note the throne speech doesn't name the "universal" single-payer publicly-funded program they are calling for. Notably, the speech also signals that universal dental care - another idea floated by the NDP - is "worth exploring."

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